

Role of social media in dissemination of agricultural information

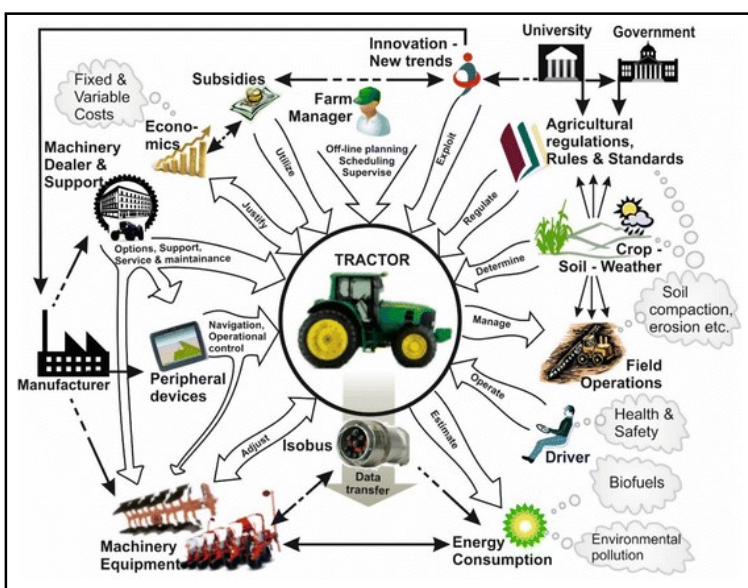
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We have been listening to an age old adage that man is a social animal. He has developed many methods for communication among his races as the exchange of ideas allows mental, physical and financial well-being of an individual . Since the pre-historic times when men started to live on this planet , communication was a necessity ; non verbal type with the body language and actions being used were the first methods for expressing ones thoughts and ideas. Soon a number of languages in millions of dialects came into picture which helped in better imparting of knowledge and new thoughts in the human brain and the development of language became one of the most prominent achievement of mankind . Steadily as times changed , conveyance of new innovations , technologies and certain ideas pertaining to different fields found new roads for diffusion into the general world . Certain technologies like radio , newspaper , television etc. made the spread of information much easier but a major breakthrough was provided by the development of social media . According to experts , social media can be defined as a digitally mediated technology which provides a platform for interaction as the users can share/ upload information and other related materials through photos, videos etc. In a layman’s language , social media is just like a group of friends sitting under a tree’s shadow and sharing matter with each other but the difference lies in the fact that they all have a virtual screen in front of them . By the virtue of this technology a person living in an island of Hawaii can share his thoughts on a particular topic with the world and someone from the a village in the Alps can get the message which has been uploaded by the person through his social media account . Any new

information can be disseminated by just a single click and more specifically by just touching the screen of an individual’s mobile. One of the most vital sectors of global development with a drastic rate of introduction of new techniques and innovations for its improvement and the people associated with it is the AGRICULTURAL sector. Food being the basic necessity of man caused this sector to develop with high rates of improvements as the current scenario of the world with highly increasing population and urbanization not only demands large quantities of food but also nutritious food with all the benefits over the previous varieties both with respect to the agriculturist and the consumer . Being an agricultural student , I personally feel that the dissemination of better methods in improving both quality and quantity of the produce by the farmer is very necessary



as we have learnt by practical application as well as in our courses like extension education that for the better and efficient adoption of new technologies well-organised, transparent and systematic diffusion or particularly dissemination of the technique is important. Agricultural sector requires thorough communication between the members associated with it and social media plays a vital role in this process. As the problems faced in the fields and in marketing of the yield require solutions which are easy to apply as well as feasible both according to the resources as well as the capacity of the farmers. Certain social media apps like Facebook, Instagram have special pages which are controlled by well reputed universities, NGOs, research centres etc. working for the betterment of agricultural technologies and methods as well as certain individual scientists and researchers. As the people

associated with the on field work have much more experience but the people working in the laboratories and universities have theoretical knowledge and the in-depth solution for their problems, social media is a very efficient tool for the exchange of the knowledge from both the sides. Being a form of communication in which every user can freely express his ideas and prospective towards a particular situation, social media allows the user to come across a variety of methods and practises in order to improve the produce. Certain webinars are also held by the concerned authorities through their social media platform and involve two way communication in which a person can participate and either perceive or share knowledge regarding any issue . As the farmers also face issues not only on the field including the problems of soil, seed , water, weed management etc . and marketing of produce but also the rise of suicides by farmers has increased pointing towards the issue that psychological state of the one who provides food to the country should also be considered. So social media has certain programs scheduled time to time which not only helps in the produce aspects but also give positivity and life lessons to the farmers because if the person who is acting as an indispensable human resource is healthy (including the mental health too) , the nation will automatically become a happier institution. The fact that some of the points which cannot be explained effectively through radio, television or newspaper can easily be diffused among the mindset of agricultural list by social media as nowadays every individual is well versed with the social media functioning and the principle of extension education that a farmer learns what he sees can be applied here because online demonstrations can help him for his betterment in a broader sense .In the year 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic millions of industries suffered huge losses as people were unable to interact with each other physically but agriculture was one of the few sectors which did not suffer considerable losses during this pandemic. The reason behind this can be the sessions headed by researchers at the agricultural institutions through social media like the online training sessions teaching better agricultural practices, online marketing portals helping to get the farmer a suitable price for the crop he has reaped for example online mandis , Kisan vigyaan Kendras etc. and certain other programs launched on social media applications like Pinterest and Facebook did not let the farmer suffer in times of distress. It is clearly evident that the contribution of social media platforms during this pandemic needs huge amount of appreciation as people were unable to do

anything outside their comfort zones as they had to save themselves from this deadly Coronavirus and by virtue of these platforms the farmer was able to grow the crops irrespective of the fact that all other industries were completely shut down. A recent example of using such platforms as a tool for reaching out to the agriculturists was the online Kisan Mela by Punjab agricultural University Ludhiana, Punjab. Sessions were planned on Facebook and YouTube and it was an interactive programme in which many learned scientists, extension workers, officers related to agriculture expressed their thoughts with the farmers and the farmers also came up with their issues and ideas on how to improve the agricultural sector. This program was a huge success and was one of a kind in India. Agricultural information which is spread out to the local people of any area by social media can be considered as first-hand information as the surveys conducted through online portals when studied under consideration reflect the actual condition of the farmers as social media allows the sharing of information according to the user and he or she can express the ideas or any problems individually and all of them are considered globally. It allows the person to sit in his home safe and healthy and take any suggestions from experienced individuals from all over the world. One more point which needs to be mentioned here is that certain new innovations and technologies which when adopted would benefit the farmers in many kinds are sometimes not accepted politically and being a democratic country we all have the right to access for such information but the media sometimes either under political pressure or any internal issue is unable to reach out to the people for the adoption of these methods. In such a situation social media has a very important role as the individual user which is a common man from the nation can share any new method to the farmers and other agriculturists. This offers a very transparent method of sharing new ideas with the common strata of people. Concluding the innumerable benefits provided by social media in dissemination of agricultural information I would like to quote the words by David Alston, founder of Marketswell Solutions “Social media is not a media. The key is to listen, engage, and build relationships.” So this technology facilitates the creation and management of a large agricultural family working together for the betterment of this sector by sharing knowledge among themselves so that each and every individual related to agriculture stays in touch with the recent advancements and excel.

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